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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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INSHH
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Subject: "A NEW YEAR'S EVE MENU." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Tonight is New Year's Eve -- the turn of the year -- and in many homes family and friends will be gathering to welcome the incoming year.

We've called on the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to suggest the refreshment part of such celebrations. No one wants anything elaborate or expensive or hard to fix this particular year. With your thoughts on "Food for Freedom", and making what you have do, you're not going out of the way to have an extravagant spread. But there's no reason why you shouldn't whip up a simple little buffet supper, such as you'd be likely to have on any holiday for the family, and share it with your friends. Then invite them to stay and see the new year in with you.

Or, if you prefer, ask them to come just a short time before the change of the year, and provide a "New Year's Eve breakfast" shortly after midnight, when the bells and whistles and shouts have died down.

Whichever kind of New Year's Eve refreshments you plan, the first item on your list will be something hot to drink. You remember the ancient tradition of the wassail cup that was passed around a few minutes before midnight, so that everybody can drink a toast to the new year as the hands of the clock cross the line and the noisemakers get into action. For this

you might serve either a cup of punch or a drink of hot spiced cider or grapejuice. Here's a recipe for spicing either cider or grape juice.

To each quart of cider, add one-fourth cup of sugar ... 8 short sticks of cinnamon ... 12 whole cloves ... and 8 whole allspice. Add a bit of salt -- about an eighth of a teaspoon. Heat this mixture to boiling. Then cool it and let it stand several hours. Heat it again and strain out the spices. Serve it hot.

Make spiced grapejuice in much the same way, only use a little more sugar and cinnamon and leave out the allspice. Add a little lemon juice at serving time to bring out the flavor.

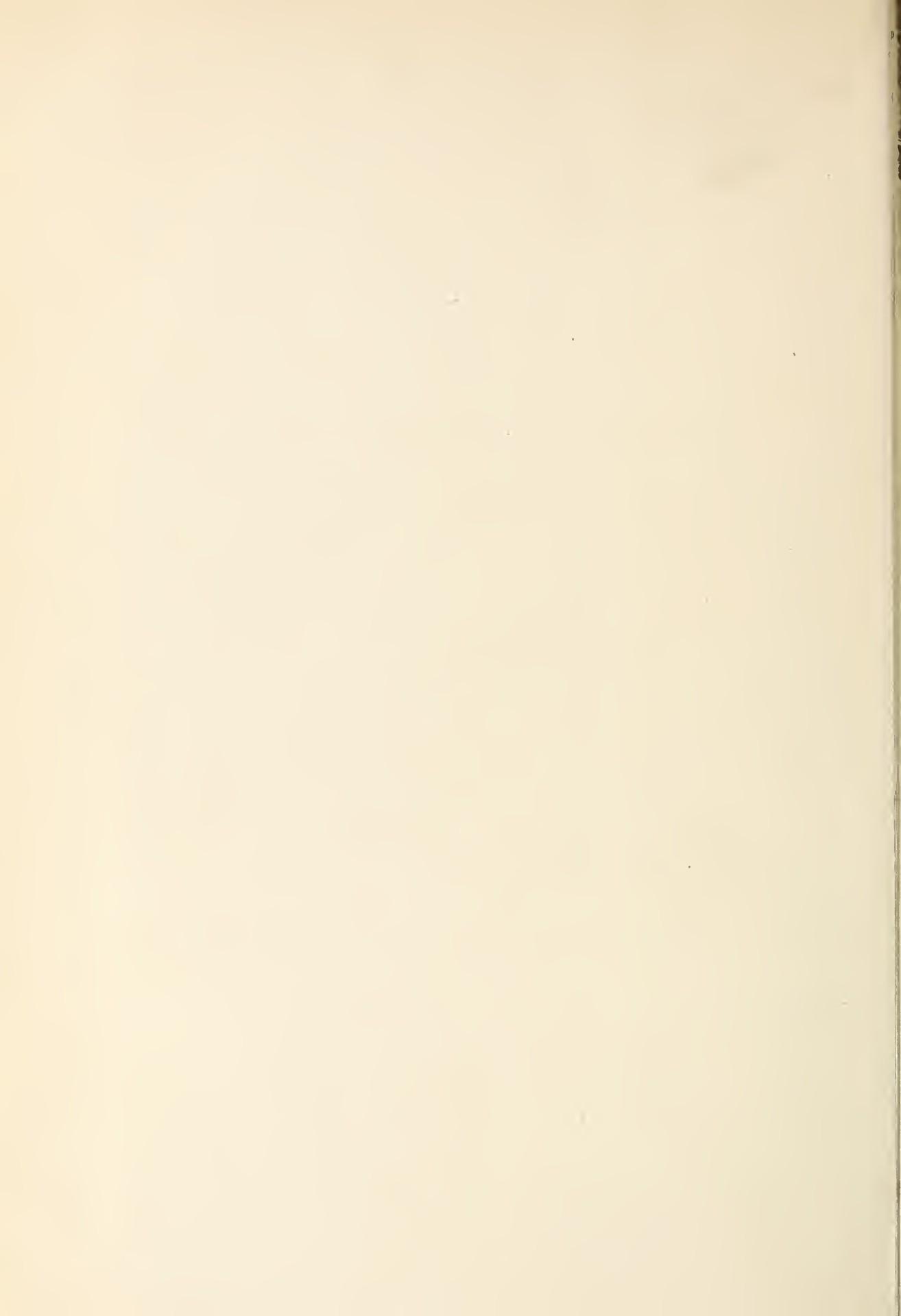
Doubtless you have your own favorite recipe for a fruit punch, made from a mixture of several fruit juices. If possible, one of these juices should be lemon. Or you can serve a fruit punch that is simply a half-and-half mixture of grapejuice and ginger ale.

Now about a menu for a buffet supper. The main thing is to plan foods that go well together and that look appetizing until the last guest serves himself. Have at least one hot dish, of a kind that is easy to keep warm. Avoid too moist foods that run over the plate, and foods that need special silver. Remember that a buffet meal is generally eaten with a fork only. Butter the rolls or biscuits beforehand. If you have a divided relish dish, fill it with different kinds of preserves, pickles, and nut meats, with the necessary servers. If you haven't one, arrange the relishes in small sauce dishes on a tray or platter. And speaking of trays, if you have enough of a suitable size, your guests may like to assemble the different foods on them and carry them to the place where they wish to sit.

Here's a buffet menu suggested by the home economists: The main dish is a platter of cold sliced meats, appetizingly arranged. Whatever you have on hand will do -- baked ham, bologna, various cold cuts of tender roast meat. A hot baked dish, like macaroni with cheese or tomato sauce, or spoon corn bread. A salad bowl of mixed greens, or individual salads, which are easier for guests to manage. You could have chopped raw vegetables in a mold of tomato aspic, or canned pears molded in lime jelly. Place a bowl of salad dressing nearby. Some people prefer their salads plain. Whatever bread you serve -- hot "icebox" rolls or biscuits, -- have it buttered beforehand. Or just pass bread and butter sandwiches. Place the coffee, with cream and sugar, and cups, where the guests can serve themselves, or pour it after they are seated. For dessert, you might have either ice cream, or small dried fruit tarts topped with whipped cream.

For a New Year's Eve breakfast, served in the "wee sma' hours", all you need to offer is a plate of sausages and scrambled eggs, with coffee, and perhaps some kind of hot bread. Cranberry muffins would be suitable, or cinnamon buns, or hot biscuits. People also like waffles and sirup for a late snack, or waffles with creamed chicken or creamed fish. But don't attempt them unless you have a small number of guests and have cooking and serving facilities to manage them easily and serve them hot. If you'd rather not serve coffee late at night, how about hot bouillon or hot tomato juice?

Well, there you have a choice of menus for New Year's Eve, and any of them can be concocted from a reasonably well stocked pantry at short notice.



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